

**St Nicholas Church, Sighthill
Christmas Service on Zoom
25th December 2020 from 10:30am**

Welcome and Bible Reading: Luke 2:1-7

The Last Candle - The Birth of Christ

Leader: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Today, we recall the hope we have in Christ. We light again the candles of hope, peace, love and joy. (Each candle will be lit as the reader speaks)

We light the first four red candles that speak of hope, peace, love and joy we have in Christ.

Now we light our last candle to remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the prophets promised so long ago, you have come to us once again; and with the shepherds, we are filled with wonder and amazement.

Let us pray,

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

**"We will light all these candles this Christmas.
Candles of joy, despite all the sadness.
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.
Candles of courage where fear is ever present.**

**Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days.
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens.
Candles of love to inspire all of our living.
Candles that will burn all the yearlong. "
Candles of joy, as we welcome the joy- bringer
And as we sing together - Joy to the world - the light is
come**

Carol: Joy to the world

Carol: Virgin Mary had a baby boy

A mysterious Christmas gift.

I looked at the gift. It looked SO different than the others under the tree. It was so carefully wrapped and even had a ribbon tied in a bow. In rich red paper it was beautiful! THIS gift was larger than the others too. Something was missing... It didn't have a name on it. I couldn't ask whose it was; it seemed too special. I just looked in wonder. Just having it under the tree added something special to Christmas.

That Christmas, along with other holidays, was not special. Holidays, in my home, were filled with lots of drinking.

Drinking always led to yelling. . .

Yelling led to fights. . .

Fights sometimes went beyond words . . .

In our home the "special" had been lost in holiday events. This Christmas in particular was framed in angry discussions of job loss and financial stress. I overheard a lot.

The GIFT was so mysterious; it was a blaze of red color in my black and white world. It captured my mind.

I could hardly contain myself as the time came to open presents! I am the youngest of four. Presents were handed out in order, oldest to youngest. Each time another gift was handed out the anticipation built.

It did not go to my sister. . .

My oldest brother did not get it. . .

My middle brother was given the box next to it. . .

Next, my mom's hand reached for THE gift . . . my world went into slow motion when she handed THE mysterious, beautifully wrapped gift to me! For just a moment I didn't move. Maybe it was a mistake... then I saw the hidden tag; it said, "To Mike from Santa." It was real. It was for me. My fingers began to un-wrap the box; I was still in disbelief. As the paper fell away, I could hardly believe my eyes; a brand new pair of black ice skates. New for ME! Being the youngest boy with two older brothers almost nothing was new coming to me. Now right in front of me were brand new shiny ice skates.

I remember nothing else of that day beyond skating up and down the ice covered country roads. I was the only one thankful for the recent ice storm! In the next few days, I'm sure I must have broken some world record for the distance skated by a 9 year old boy.

That gift lifted me out of a fog. I'm not sure what I would label the fog. Maybe it was the expectation that somehow Christmas should be special. Maybe it was TV or maybe comments I heard at school but somehow I thought Christmas should be a special time. The mysterious gift made that Christmas the most memorable of my childhood. I never found out who "Santa" was.

I wish I could say, "Thank you" and let them know how much that gift meant. Someone's kindness made a significant impact and a memorable Christmas.

I now know there is another mysterious gift that makes Christmas special. Often it is missed in the busyness, emotion or misplaced focus of the season. This gift has removed the fog of despair that had a grip on my life. This mysterious gift came in the form of a baby born in a stable. When I consider that Jesus left the perfection of heaven, it is almost incomprehensible. He came to walk the planet He created. Each day, His heart was broken by the people he came to serve. He did this for nine year old boys. All this is wonderful, mysterious and beautiful. What a gift. Since I do know THIS gift giver, I can say "Thank you" for a life changing gift.

Have you considered Jesus, the One whose heart has been broken and He knows all your hurts and sorrows. Would you like to know Him personally? You can by simply opening up your life to Him and asking Him to come into your life, forgive you sins and direct your life from this moment on. You can pray a prayer something like this:

Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life to You and ask You to come in as my Saviour and Lord. Take control of my life. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Bring peace to my world this Christmas. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen

Carol: Away in the manger

Prayer: Thank you, Lord for Mary.

Thank you for her willingness to do what you asked of her, for the care she took of Jesus while he was a baby and as he grew up.

Mary showed great faith in you, trusting you although the way ahead was hard.

Remembering her faith we pray for Christians living in places where following you is difficult and dangerous. We pray that like Mary they will be filled with your joy and peace and know that they can always trust your promises.

Thank you, Lord, for Joseph.

Thank you that he protected Mary and Jesus when Herod was trying to kill the baby. He was willing to leave his home and his work to take them to a safe place in Egypt.

We remember how Joseph looked after Mary and Jesus and we pray for people who care for others:

for health professionals and social workers;

for those who work to bring aid to people suffering the effects of wars and natural disasters;

for those people who give care and support to friends and neighbours.

Thank you, Lord, for the Angels.

Thank you that they sang about peace on Earth and told the shepherds that they need not be afraid.

We pray today for people who are afraid:

People who are afraid because they face uncertainty at work or in their personal lives;

People who are afraid because they face pain and illness;

And for people who live in fear of violence or abuse.

Thank you, Lord, for the Shepherds

Thank you that they were the first people to be told the good news, showing us all that God reaches out to ordinary people, people that no-one else thinks are important.

The shepherds were a group of people who were overlooked and marginalised by their neighbours.

And we pray today for people who are on the edge; for people who find life difficult because they are homeless or have mental health problems.

Thank you, Lord, for the Star that guided the Wise Men.

Thank you that it blazed the message of your glory across the skies and drew the travellers towards

Jesus. We pray for all those who tell others about you: preachers, teachers and evangelists, and all who reach out to others in the name of Jesus.

We pray that we too may be eager to share the good news of Christ's coming this Christmas.

Thank you, Lord, for the Wise Men.

Thank you that they used their knowledge and skill to find you and to serve you. We pray for all who serve you through their talents and abilities: for musicians, artists and writers; for craftsmen and women; for all who arrange flowers, sew or knit or bake. We pray that we may use our skills and talents in your service

And above all things, thank you, Lord, for Jesus

Thank you that he came to be with us, to live and die for us; that his great love is part of the very fabric of creation.

He is our Lord and Saviour And we ask all these prayers in his name. Amen.

Lord's prayer!

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,
forever.
Amen.

Carol: Hark! The herald angels sing

Blessing:

Whether you are joyful, or sad;
whether you are in company, or alone;
whether you believe in Christmas, or not:
may the joy of the birth of Jesus seep into your soul
and the love of God surround you and enfold you
all your life long, Amen